

Suggested reading

The following are reviews of recent books that should be of interest to the readers of the *IBM Systems Journal*. Inquiries should be directed to the publishers cited.

A Close Look at MVS Systems: Mechanisms, Performance and Security, Ronald Paans. Elsevier Science Publishing Company, Inc., New York, 1986. 572 pp. plus xiv. (ISBN 0-444-70008-0). Ronald Paans's new book is the kind of book I wish I had had available when I started systems programming. Although it is long, it is well organized and written in the style of an experienced systems programmer explaining the "ropes" to a novice. It is specific. Starting with System/370 hardware, Paans covers MVS and TSO software; then he digs into his specialties: performance and security.

In these areas, the literature is often general and vague, amounting to a user-friendly translation of the technical manuals. In this book, however, we get not only descriptions but also recommendations: what works, what does not work, and how things should be done. For example, macro and supervisor-call parameters are suggested, based on experience with real live production systems.

Finally, Paans provides practical and responsible insight for people whose job it is to keep an MVS system running well. His humor and pointers amidst enormous complexities should give hope to anyone who has just received the latest truckload of systems documentation.

Baird Smith

Designing the User Interface, Ben Shneiderman, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Reading, MA, 1987. 448 pp. (ISBN 0-201-16505-8). Picking up where his **Software Psychology** left off, Ben Shneiderman has written an easy-to-read, comprehensive survey of issues, experimental evidence, and contemporary wisdom pertinent to the design of usable and pleasing computer systems. The book integrates research data with the good sense garnered from many years of concern and active involvement in the creation and study of humane computer interfaces. The result is a broad set of guidelines that may be profitably considered throughout the course of system design, implementation, and test.

Shneiderman discusses interaction devices ranging from keyboard, mouse, and touch-sensitive screen to speech and visual display. He includes among software interaction styles: menus, commands, natural language, and direct manipulation. He explores communication with the user through system messages, manuals, and on-line assistance. Finally, he addresses procedural aspects of interface development including iterative design, testing, and evaluation.

Shneiderman is ever mindful of the need for successful design to be rooted in understanding the user, be it in task analysis, cognitive psychology, or individual preferences and style. The book is generously illustrated, giving the reader a concrete feel for the wide range of interface styles discussed. **Designing the User Interface** provides an excellent introduction to state-of-the-art human factors research, and would be valuable reading for interface designers, product planners, developers, and others concerned with the vitality of the user interface.

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